

Otter Creek Survey



Executive Summary December 2010

The Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources conducted a voluntary and anonymous Web survey* to obtain public input from those interested in the future of Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area in Meade County. The electronic survey was launched on 24 September and publicized through a variety of media to encourage public awareness and participation. Paper copies were provided upon request to those without Internet access. The survey closed at midnight on 15 October.

The total number of surveys completed was 4,242. The average (mean) number of household members reported was 3.15. The sum of household members across surveys was 13,345. Most participants (93%) resided in Kentucky, particularly in counties in the vicinity of Otter Creek.

Most participants were male (75%) and married (74%). Participants' ages were relatively evenly distributed among 5-year age categories from 15 to 64 years old. The largest single age group represented was 45-49 (14%). Most participants either had some college (27%) experience, a bachelor's degree (26%), or a Master's or Doctoral degree (17%), while 17% had either a high school diploma or GED. Almost all participants were Caucasian (96%) and resided in a suburban (38%) or rural area (33%). Most survey participants had visited Otter Creek Park before it closed in 2009 (76%), and of those, about 96% had visited more than once. About 88% of park visitors were satisfied with their experiences there. The most popular activities at the former Otter Creek Park among survey participants were hiking (69%), wildlife viewing (56%), picnicking (48%), visiting the nature center (43%), fishing (37%), walking (32%), and primitive camping (31%).

**Because participation in this survey was open to the public and voluntary (self-selected), statistics derived from its data were not statistically representative of any particular population. Rather, the survey provided a means of obtaining broader public input than was possible through a conventional public meeting.*

Survey participants were also asked about their recreational activity on other areas during the last three years. A total of 64% reported having fished, while 41% had other household members who fished. Approximately 57% hunted in the last 3 years, while 21% had other household members who hunted. Over 60% wildlife-watched, while 43% had other household members who participated in wildlife-watching. Approximately 41% of participants had been involved recently in target shooting, 30% in shotgun shooting, 28% in archery shooting, and 65% bought a hunting or fishing license. Approximately 50% participated in primitive camping and 23% camped with RVs. A majority (57%) had recently paid a fee to access outdoor recreation. The average (median) time participants were willing to travel for quality outdoor recreation was 90 minutes.

About 88% of Web survey participants were interested in visiting Otter Creek after it re-opens. Among survey participants, the most popular activities desired at Otter Creek were hiking, fishing, wildlife viewing, and primitive camping (each indicated by at least 50% of participants). Other popular activities (interest shown by 25% or more of survey participants) included, in descending order: visiting a nature center, hunting, picnicking, photography, target shooting, kayaking or canoeing, walking, swimming, shotgun shooting, dog walking, archery, bicycling, mountain biking, and birdwatching.

The most preferred trails access option for horseback riders and mountain bikers was to partition the trails spatially so that each group uses separate, designated trails totaling about half the total trail mileage each.

The Department does not receive General Fund tax dollars, but is predominantly funded by user fees, such as hunting and fishing licenses. It will be necessary to fund other non-traditional recreational opportunities at Otter Creek with user fees. Participants were asked to rate fee options for admission and special activity fees for horseback riding, mountain biking, and shooting sports. It is the Department's intention for children under 12 to be exempt from a daily or annual entry fees.

Low and high fee options were offered randomly to half of the survey participants in order to gauge willingness to pay different fee amounts. For admission fees, about 70% of participants rated the low daily fee option of \$5 and low annual fee option of \$50 as "about right" or better, though around 30% perceived each as "somewhat high." By contrast, the high daily fee option of \$10 was rated "somewhat" or "very high" by over 70% and the \$100 annual entry fee option was rated as high by about 62% of survey participants.

Special activity fee options were comparably rated to those of admission fees. The "low" activity fee options (\$5/day and \$50/year) were rated "about right" or low by over 60% of survey participants, whereas 55% felt that a \$10/day or \$100/year fee was somewhat or very high.